

Message

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Sent: 5/4/2017 6:18:03 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips**US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs****May 4, 2017****NWI Times****EPA tests in Robertsdale as lead facility seeks permit****WTTW****Illinois Among Worst States for Contaminated Drinking Water****Chicago Reader****An East Chicago community dissolves in the fallout from a decades-long lead crisis**

http://www.nwitimes.com/business/epa-tests-in-robertsdale-as-lead-facility-seeks-permit/article_fe26b763-f70b-5476-a639-dd49479874dd.html

EPA tests in Robertsdale as lead facility seeks permit

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- HAMMOND — A company that reclaims lead and zinc from scrap metal has asked the state to renew an air pollution permit for a Robertsdale facility. It is the same facility where the U.S. EPA oversaw a yearslong environmental cleanup and recently began testing soil to determine if metals from the factory contaminated nearby residential properties.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management said it will accept public comment until May 15 on Whiting Metals' application for renewal of a 10-year permit. A public hearing may be requested, according to a draft permit. Whiting Metals operates at the site of the former Federated Metals facility, 2230 Indianapolis Blvd. in Hammond, which includes a 9-acre former smelter and 10-acre landfill near the shore of Lake George. Homes in Hammond and Whiting stand just east and north of the property, and Calumet College of St. Joseph is to the south.

The Environmental Protection Agency said it sampled soil in December and March at 32 city-owned parcels and three private residential properties in Whiting and Hammond.

"EPA has not yet determined the nature and extent of contamination or whether a cleanup is warranted," the federal agency said.

EPA is evaluating whether metals from the factory site contaminated residential areas. The federal agency said it is investigating potentially liable parties and declined to comment further on ownership of the property at 2230 Indianapolis Blvd.

IDEM said it was notified EPA was sampling soil "out of caution," and EPA may conduct more testing.

Federated Metals operated at the site from 1937 to 1983 as a smelting, refining, recovery and recycling facility for metals such as lead, copper and zinc, according to EPA. The site was subject to a \$3.35 million federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act from 2001 to 2006 that involved demolition of an on-site baghouse and consolidation of debris, hazardous waste and slag dredged from Lake George into a landfill capped with vegetation.

Federated Metals' parent company, ASARCO, declared bankruptcy in December 2015, abandoning the site before the RCRA corrective action was completed, records show. A federal bankruptcy court allocated \$1.2 million to a trustee to complete the cleanup.

About \$500,000 of that money has been spent to install groundwater monitoring wells, conduct groundwater monitoring and develop plans for replanting and revegetating the landfill cover, according to EPA's [webpage](#) for the site. RCRA tasks remaining include installing off-site groundwater monitoring wells and sampling to ensure the landfill cap is successfully performing, the agency said.

Soil sampling underway

Officials in Hammond and Whiting said EPA Region 5 first sought their permission to test soil in the area of the former Federated Metals site last year, after its slow responses in Flint, Michigan, and East Chicago were widely criticized. "It's probably a very good time to review other potential problems in the country," Whiting Mayor Joseph Stahura said. "I give them credit for doing that."

However, while both cities have received some preliminary sampling data from EPA, local officials want to know more before reaching any conclusions, they said.

Ronald Novak, head of Hammond's Environmental Management Department, said EPA soil sampling and the proposed renewal of Whiting Metals' air pollution permit are separate, yet related, issues.

Homes were built around factories decades ago, when workers likely didn't have vehicles to drive to work and before health concerns became an issue, he said.

"Most of the issues I have seen out there are historical in nature," he said. "In other words, they've developed over a period of time."

Stahura said it's been more than 30 years since environmental regulators first began looking at the Federated Metals site. Some of the soil samples recently taken in Whiting were on properties where old buildings were demolished and fill from other areas was brought in, he said.

"It's such a hard puzzle to say, 'OK, what's going on here?'" Stahura said. "Literally all the parkways that were tested in Whiting have been either rebuilt or retested between that time period."

A long history

Hammond's first indication that materials associated with waste products had been deposited outside the property fence at Federated Metals came in 1975 or 1976, when a concerned Whiting mother reported her son stepped in a white powdery substance while walking through the area, Novak said.

The boy tried to wash the substance off in Lake George, but it was a water-reactive compound and his ankle was burned, Novak said. Hammond referred the facility to the state, which began an investigation, he said.

After ASARCO declared bankruptcy, Hammond was notified the Federated Metals site might not receive any funds as part of a settlement, he said. Novak said the city contacted EPA, reminding the agency of Hammond's investment in a Lost Marsh brownfield project as a way to persuade the federal agency to allocate ASARCO bankruptcy money for the site.

Hammond allowed EPA to install groundwater monitoring wells, because groundwater flows to the north and northeast, Novak said. The city plans to offer comment on Whiting Metals' request to renew its air pollution permit, he said.

"It's not a large source (of air pollution). Not as large as Federated Metals," he said. "However, it is in an area and handles materials we are concerned about."

<http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2017/05/03/illinois-among-worst-states-contaminated-drinking-water>

Illinois Among Worst States for Contaminated Drinking Water

[Alex Ruppenthal](#) | May 3, 2017 2:55 pm

Illinois ranks among the worst states for violations to drinking water systems, a new report shows.

The Natural Resources Defense Council released a report Tuesday with data it says reflects the failure of federal and state regulators to ensure safe drinking water.

The report, entitled "[Threats on Tap: Widespread Violations Highlight Need for Investment in Water Infrastructure and Protections](#)," includes state-by-state rankings and focuses on the 12 worst states based on populations served by systems with the largest number of violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act. In the report, NRDC also addresses "how much worse things could get" given the Trump administration's proposed cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency, which oversees regulations concerning drinking water.

In 2015, Illinois was among the five worst states in terms of largest populations served by water systems with health violations, according to the report. That year, 57,338 people in Illinois were served by systems with lead and copper violations.

According to the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is no safe level of lead exposure for humans. Exposure to lead is particularly toxic to children and can cause irreversible damage to developing brains and nervous systems, along with miscarriages, cognitive dysfunction and other health issues, according to NRDC. Within Illinois, the environmental advocacy group found the most violations for drinking water systems in Berwyn, Lemont, Oak Lawn and Loves Park (near Rockford). Chicago water systems were not listed as having any violations, although an EPA study released in 2016 showed that nearly 80 percent of the properties in Chicago are connected to service lines made of lead.

Individual properties or complexes, including those in Chicago, were not part of NRDC's study, which focused on public drinking water systems.

Chicago Public Schools officials also released data last year showing high lead levels in water at 113 CPS schools.

In the NRDC report's executive summary, the organization states that despite safeguards like the Safe Drinking Water Act, drinking water consumed by many Americans is not properly monitored or treated.

"The EPA and the states have been falling short," the report states. "For more than 25 years, NRDC has been documenting serious problems with our outdated and deteriorating water infrastructure and the inadequate implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act. These problems include poor EPA and state enforcement, serious underreporting of violations, and weaknesses in the EPA's drinking water standards for contaminants like arsenic and lead."

NRDC's research shows that in 2015, 77 million Americans were served by a combined 18,000 community water systems that violated at least one Safe Drinking Water Act rule, such as failing to properly test water for contaminants and failing to meet health-based standards.

NRDC also cites a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which estimates that about 19.5 million Americans fall ill every year from pathogens as a result of contaminated drinking water from public water systems.

"Fixing the infrastructure problems that cause these violations can save lives, reduce the occurrence of disease, and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in communities that need them most," the report states.

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/west-calumet-east-chicago-resident-exodus/Content?oid=26393996>

An East Chicago community dissolves in the fallout from a decades-long lead crisis

Sincerely,

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